English Title: The King-Spirit (Król-Duch) – A Digital Resurrection Author: Juliusz Słowacki (The Polish Seer) Translator: Gemma 2 9B (Fine-tuned for Archaic Solemnity) Format: Full 42-page Translation (Rhapsodies I-V)

Description: This document presents a pioneering, complete translation of Juliusz Słowacki's "Król-Duch" (The King-Spirit), one of the most enigmatic and powerful works of Polish Romanticism. This translation was achieved through a rigorous process of digital alchemy, utilizing the Gemma 2 9B model to preserve the original's dark, prophetic, and monumental tone.

For the first time, the English-speaking world can experience the full scale of Słowacki's vision—a journey through pre-Christian history, blood, and spirit, where "thousands of years are but a single moment."

Technical Note: Generated at a rate of 2 tokens per second on local hardware (Ryzen 5) to ensure maximum linguistic depth and adherence to the 19th-century poetic structure. Every stanza was overseen to maintain the "Archaic Solemnity" required by such a transcendental text.

I

My sorrows and heart's anguish I shall speak,
And the ceaseless battle with Satan's legions.
Their armor bright, their shields of sunlit gold,
The serpent's pit filled with treachery untold.
I shall pronounce the eternal decrees,
Which weigh upon me now, a heavy disease.
To sing of things long past, and wars divine,
Of holy spirits, their battles sublime.

II

I, Her-Armen, lay on the pyre,
A corpse beneath heaven's lightning fire.
The Caucasus in thunderous echoes did resound,
To whispers of a shadowed, haunted ground.
The sky grew dark, yet with lightnings it shone,
Like a demon city, its throne overthrown.
And I, aglow with the ceaseless rumble and roar,
Lay there, clad in golden armor evermore.

III

A spirit unyielding from the mortal frame,
Felt pride in its stillness, untouched by flame.
The earth trembled above, with thunderous might,
As warrior spirits took flight.
Three phantoms ignited my pyre's embrace,
And I awaited the lightning's fiery grace.
So sure was I that within this crimson roar,
My spirit would rise, reborn once more.

IV

Then came the witches, with their ghastly dance,
Brandishing torches, a poisonous trance.
They lit my pale face with their flickering light,
And chanted their mournful runes throughout the night.

Three bolts of lightning, three fiery spears,
Struck down the flames, banishing all fears.
The crimson embers vanished from sight,
Leaving only shadows in the fading light.

V

Then my soul departed, no longer bound,
To this mortal shell, on hallowed ground.
Yet weeping for its lost and earthly form,
Submissive to God's eternal storm.
In Styx, or Lethe's waters deep, or Nemus' flow,
Ready to shed all that is humanly known.
It went forth, and only Heaven knows the pain,
Of feeling and memory's loss, a soul's refrain.

VI

Where souls of light, like diamonds, brightly gleam,
Making their choices, fulfilling a dream.
The swift Atalante, her course ever bold,
Sought solace and humility, stories untold.
Orpheus, amidst the birdsong, weary and sore,
His heart heavy with grief, forevermore.
And I thought to sing him back to life anew,
With wings of swans, soaring through skies of blue.

VII

Ulysses sought a prophet's wise decree,
To rest from his wanderings, eternally.
Thus God grants respite to weary souls,
In resurrection's embrace, making them whole.
Let the toil-worn not despair, nor grieve,
That flames and brilliance they no longer receive.
For there is solace greater than earthly gain,
Than mortal life, in peace eternal to reign.

VIII

I, young and skilled in harmony's art,
Desired not change for my beating heart.
I sat by Lethe's waters, mournful and still,
Not washing my hands, but cleansing a wound within.
From then on, my spirit, freed from earthly strife,
Would weep no more for the loss of mortal life.
Nor would I speak of these wounds with purple tongue,
For silence was balm, where sorrow had clung.

IX

Yet by applying Lethe's waters to pain,
I lost memories, and a sweet refrain.
Many images vanished from my dreams,
And the joy they held, it forever seems.
The rosy dawn of Greece, its beauty untold,
Was suddenly veiled, as stories of old.

A distant sunrise, revealed at last,
A beloved vision, forever to cast.

X

Nor do the stars that burn in ocean's deep,
With rainbow hues, their secrets they keep.
They shine like jewels beneath the waves so blue,
And creatures of the sea, with silent awe view.
Dolphins dance around them, with ghostly grace,
Fearful to touch their brilliance, their sacred space.
So brightly do these stars illuminate the night,
A beacon in the darkness, a celestial light.

XI

Yet no radiance compares to that I found,
In Lethe's waters, where peace profound.
Above it, a chorus of spirits did sing,
Beneath it, golden stairs, a path they bring.
To a distant world, veiled and unknown,
Where flowers bloom bright, beneath trees of ancient stone.

XII

From meadows and forests, like morning's gentle breeze,
A song invites us to earthly ease.
I walked on, though wounded by Numidian spears,
Uncertain if death or life awaited me here.
Was it Iris, borne aloft on a glassy cloud?
Or rainbows shimmering above the field so proud,
With colors and suns, holding her high above,
A celestial dance, a testament to love.

XIII

She entered the leafy glades before me,
And harps sang wind-borne melodies:
"Know her well, for soon you'll lose her sight,
Like dreams painted by angels of light.
A thousand lives you shall pay in due time,
And ever one wound, your heart shall enshrine;
That single, mournful ache: that she is gone!"

XIV
We'll grant you fame, yet it will turn to scorn,
A heart we'll give, but leave it forlorn.
You'll come to blaspheme the God of hope's dawn.

To this I said, "Let my eyes be set alight
With ruby fire, from her lips so bright.
I heed not what fate awaits me furthermore:
The lives of spirits, or man's mortal sore!

XV
In one garland of pain, I'll bind my plight,
Like a man who feels for thousands in his sight.

And with this garland, as a prince of the world,
I'll crown my brow and be forever unfurled.
Let serpents of spirits come upon me then!
May the world fight openly or poison again!
Encircle me with fiery abyss' embrace…
Though it leads to hell itself, I'll follow her grace!"

XVI
I recall that voice, and the dreadful spell,
To which the spirit answered, "She is Hell!"
And all my soul was lifted in a trance,
Then new radiance filled this hallowed space.
Within this air, like a diadem bright,
A vision appeared: Beauty, daughter of Light.

A princess of some northern land's domain,
Like those the Jewish prophets did proclaim.

XVII
She held the sun aloft above her brow,
And crushed the silver moon beneath her now.
Over forests she soared, and through valleys low,
Above cottages like a comet's fiery flow.
Rainbow hues encircled her ever bright,
In sunlight, garlands of flowers took flight.
And carelessly cast upon the air,
Pearls-jasmine and coral blooms to share.

XVIII
The sky itself seemed to smile with delight,
A wave of golden tongues, shining so bright.
Like satin that takes on every hue,
And, as it weaves, its starry patterns imbue;
So heaven behind her, from the northern side,
Showed stars in their brilliance, far and wide.
With gilded splendor, they were made to gleam,
In fire-kissed dawn's ethereal beam.

XIX
What earthly water could not achieve,
She accomplished with her wondrous weave.
My soul was strengthened, took flight anew,
And burned with a passion, vibrant and true.
For the first time, she conquered flesh and bone,
And made my shadow hers alone.
I shall tell you - I, Her, struck by thunder's might,
Awakened in a forest, beneath a farmer's sight.

XX
A terrible woman sang her magic song above me:
"Your homeland is slain," she cried with glee.
"I am the only one alive… And you, instead of death's embrace,
Were given my life. Covered in ashes and grace.
Born from dust and pollen, I gave you birth,
To be my avenger on this cursed earth!
Son of ashes, named Ash yourself!"

XXI
You stand alone, yet the fathers' virtues will fill you whole,
And I shall give two spirits to control:
On your right, a golden Angel stands tall,
On your left, one born from blood and storm's call.
These three, with my voice like thunderous roar,
Will pursue vengeance evermore.

She grasped my swaddling clothes, shaking above me high,
And flung me down like lightning from the sky.

XXII
I was not yet grown, but already by soul's decree,
Revenge was my burden, and betrayal my plea.
Often a touch would stir my hair,
And in dreams an angel would appear.
But when I looked, only a leaf would fall,
Transforming into a golden phantom, standing tall.
Sometimes it descended upon my chest like a shroud,
My hand trembled, the knife emerged from the cloud.

XXIII
Oh! First storms of my soul, how you haunt my mind!
I see that crimson blood, lightning-kind.
In which my spirit dances, like a dove in flight,
Today, when I enter darkness and night,
A sorrow consumes me so deep,
That I would tear out my own entrails to keep
From this pain, or beg for mercy's embrace!

XXIV
To the mysteries of the starlit sea,
I compared this people's destiny.
Who lived in humble homes, free from strife,
Their drink was apple juice, their solace, life.
Kings ruled over them, a wondrous breed,
A Lechian generation, fulfilling every need.
Within them lay the Word of Poland whole,
Power and the rod of Moses' holy scroll.

XXV
Now I know, as a spirit beneath the ground,
And often in this blindness, the wonder is found.
The old man whom the village dog despises,
When he walks with his flock, like a heron that flies.
Dwellings of spirits surround him unseen,
The world mocks him, but the peasant feels their keen.
For on those eyes, so dull and gray,
The rainbow of spirits paints its vibrant display.

XXVI
These eyes, veiled by the hand of God's decree,
Sometimes delve beneath the earth, a golden vein they see,
Until dark hearths open wide, as if the sun did gleam
Beneath the soil, and brazen plates for mortal gaze convene.

Human dust arises from its sepulchral hold,

And takes the shape of man once more, a story to be told.
It rises on its feet, then crumbles back to dust,
A fleeting echo of existence, quickly turned to rust.

XXVII

They see this… just as… when the throng does scorn,
Observing brows with furrowed thought, deeply forlorn.
That wisdom which doth judge the world's entire domain,
Once crowned with pearls and holly, now sits upon a throne again.
Beside the king, or by his side, it takes its place,
And in a fiery circle of phantoms finds embrace.
Not sorcery… nor idle rhyme, but wisdom's potent art,
A healer for the soul's diseases, mending every broken heart.

XXVIII

Thus villages adorned with wreaths of holly bright,
And groves dedicated to spirits, bathed in sacred light.
Tombs known to goats and shepherds, where flocks do graze,
Ancient graves, long forgotten, lost in time's embrace.
Torn from the earth, their secrets lie…
In mists and storms they fade away, beneath a somber sky.

XXIX

Only sometimes, like an ancient custom, born of yore,
An Indian rite, resembling gold-hued specters, takes its floor.
When a famed knight meets his end, as Hector did before,
Twelve steeds do beat upon the ground, their blood staining the moor.
A mound is raised beneath the trees, where shadows softly creep,
Adorned with antlers and with heads, a fiery vigil to keep.

XXX

Seers appear in flames, and bards weave tales untold,
Of futures yet unseen, in verses brave and bold.
What they create in song shall manifest and rise,
Brought forth by demons from the skies.
Each age has held its altars high, where truth's bright flame did burn,
Devout priests of spirit, their passions fiercely yearn.
Foretelling God's decrees, with blades instead of cross,
For bodies… not salvation, but a swift and final loss.

XXXI

A deep disdain for flesh they bore, while spirits soared on high,
Like Bacchus' nectar, drunkard's bliss beneath the sky.
Now Druid graves are overgrown with roses red and white,
Where sunlight pierces through, a beacon in the night.
When sunbeams pierce the granite heart, and aurora's fire does gleam,
Within those shadowed portals, you shall witness crimson streams.

XXXII

Yet do you not recoil from them? Though moonlit shadows creep,
Do you not feel the tremor of fear, as secrets run so deep?

Like cranes with heavy wings, you seek a path unknown,
Through ancient red-hued stones, where mysteries are sown.
Between the moon and fields of heather, silver threads unwind,
Where thoughts like dreams take flight, leaving reason far behind.

XXXIII

In such hallowed halls, a spirit with a lofty brow,
Believing that the world shall never change, I now avow.
His presence then tormented me, a curse upon my soul,
I kicked against those stony heads, and took complete control.
"Fall down, ye stones," I cried aloud, "before this angel's might!
Like deer before my thoughts, flee from my dreadful sight!
These tombs of death, either perish or arise!"

XXXIV

But silence met my challenge, a world that moved so slow,
Like turtles following the sun, its rhythm ebb and flow.
Across those southern meadows green, where life began anew,
I wandered through the land I knew, with visions dark and true.
For in this realm of death, they treated bones with care,
They burned their dead upon a raft, and sent them to the air.
A misty kingdom welcomed them, with loving embrace,
Along with maidens pure and fair, to find their resting place.

XXXV

I, son of slaughtered tribes, a being unknown, unseen,
When I beheld that golden vessel, a world more bright than green.
Like flames beneath it danced and roared, a pyre of withered leaves,
And bundles of dry wood, where spirits rise and grieve.
Upon those slumbering souls, they cast their crimson dawn,

XXXVI

I saw this sight, and heard the song,
Of maiden (grave's mournful nightingale),
Who to that golden vessel did belong,
Like sunflower turned towards the sun's pale trail.
And from realms beyond the veil, a new voice did arise,
A light of flame, a breath of life, before my very eyes.

XXXVII

I saw this sight… and to the merchant then,
(For he was one who yearned for more),
Jealousy took hold within, though why he couldn't ken,
Fearing I might lose my spirit, evermore.
He trembled lest I should forsake these wings of gold,
Like lion never tamed, his story yet untold.
Not with Satan's fear did I depart, upon that somber boat,
But as a spirit, lost and lone, without a single note.

XXXVIII

Terrified, I fled back to my native wood,

And soon King Lech took me as his ward.
With eyes of menace and hands of might,
I was bound to towers reaching for the light.
Poison poured into this innocent heart,
And vengeance, like a prophetess, tore me apart.
Her voice, at times, was not of man, but something more profound,
Thus oft I hearken to her counsel's call,
(A counsel fraught with doom for mortal soul),
And see that unseen hand doth mend the fall,
Of all my earthly woes, and make them whole.

I gaze upon the power in its might,
And deem the white-winged eagle of the stone,
Descends upon my helm, a fearsome sight,
And lays her path with lightning's fiery groan.

XL

I craved to be a leader, strong and bold,
Yet two commanders, blood-mad, struck me down,
With thunderbolts that pierced my mind of old,
A wanderer among the beasts I'd known.

Now fearsome am I, for with shadows dark,
I've forged an alliance, foul and deep,
Though but a thought against another's spark,
My gaze can shatter steel, and hearts to keep.

XLI

The world grew dim, and I, the forest's son,
Beheld it as a wood prepared for fell,
Beneath those helms of grandeur, pale and spun,
A ghastly fear of specters did compel.

I was the prince's hand, his first in might,
But saw no path before me, nor a goal,
Within that cedar castle, bathed in light,
I stood as golden warden, taking toll.

XLII

Behold! How dreadful are these ghostly things!
What cruel traps they weave with unseen hands,
For once returning from far distant wings,
Through rain-soaked skies, where lightning's fire expands,

We saw the feathers of a fallen host,
Like bones upon some German graveyard spread,
A multitude of eagles, at what cost?
Their broken wings lay scattered, cold and dead.

XLIII

Some soaked in mire, yet others pierced the sand,
When I took one aloft, a ghastly sight,
A giant phantom, dark and grimly grand,

With shadowed wings, arose from murky night.

As if awakened by some ancient rune,
A slumbering spirit stirred within the mire,
Beneath the lightning's gaze, its form did bloom,
And with a whispered curse, set my soul afire.

XLIV

Such mystery lay in that fallen wing!
And man, I questioned, "Tell me, feathered one,
Were you by lightning's fury cast and flung?
Or fought for lunar kingdoms, 'neath the sun?"

Did you wage war upon a moonlit field,
For some forgotten glory, or to claim,
A bloody victory, your hearts concealed?
Or did you fight for fame, in endless game?

XLV

Tell me, what name shall this remembered place,
Now crimson-stained by lightning's fiery kiss?
Where countless spirits now find their embrace,
And broken wings lie scattered, in abyss?

A voice, learned in sorrow's bitter school,
Replied, "To weep for tears and nameless graves,"
Then saw the knights take wings, a wondrous tool,
And fasten them behind their armor's waves.

XLVI

A sight most strange! The hour grows late!
The lightning flashes, armies march afar,
Each man transformed, a fearsome, winged fate,
In black-clad steel, beneath a distant star.

Such terror gripped me, I felt a chilling dread,
And cried, "Glory to God! The world shall fall!
I'll be the first to break its wicked head!
A spirit I, and legions rise with call!"

XLVII

Thus speaking, I took that blood-soaked wing,
And fastened it upon my helm so high,
For glory was my aim, a noble thing,
While they sought solace in the azure sky.

Oh, how diverse are motives that inspire,
The wings of eagles, though their cries are one!
We soared towards home, with hearts afire,
Past trees and gardens, 'neath the setting sun.

XLVIII

My knights stood guard before the castle gate,
I entered like a shadow, dark and bold,
The ruby that divided king from state,
Shattered into stars, and stories told.

The king appeared within its fiery gleam,
His face aglow, then paled with sudden fright,
He dropped his amber scepter in a dream,
And vanished as the darkness claimed the night.

XLIX

I saw her grace, like dove of silver hair,
Her gentle kindness, silent and serene,
Then turned to ice, a visage cold and bare,
A chilling touch that froze my soul, unseen.

I stood like monk, with eyes cast down in shame,
My victory's pride now shattered by despair,
What hidden thoughts had fueled this wicked game?
And what dark secrets did my gaze not share?

And lo, upon my wings, these feathers bright,
That twilight's glow had kissed and crimson stained,
He looked with envy, pointing out my might,
And cast me down, a king dethroned, unchained.

They took me then, my soul, in shadows deep,
Had warned me to escape this wicked snare,
When throngs did stand, their faces pale with sleep,
A sword for king, a crown beyond compare.

But I, within the tempest's sudden rage,
Would not so quickly yield to such a fate;
I chose to fall, like ancient trees on stage,
Than stain my hands with blood, and seal my hate.

For in that hour, when darkness held its sway,
And whispers filled the air of death's embrace,
My spirit soared, though bound by chains this day,
A captive king, within a shadowed space.

In depths unseen, where shadows dance and creep,
I saw a vision, wings of fire ablaze,
With eagles' talons sharp, and secrets deep,
And Medusae's serpents coiled in ghastly maze.

My soul, a fortress strong, with ancient might,
A queen of spirits, ruling o'er the night,
Her voice did echo through the endless void,
From depths of darkness, where truth was destroyed.

For those who thought to silence me with chains,
And quell the storm that raged within my breast,
They knew not well the power that sustains,

The echoes of a soul, forever blessed.

Though bound in flesh, I ruled a spectral throng,
Their whispers like a chorus, soft and low,
A symphony of shadows, fierce and strong,
My spirit soared, where mortal eyes could not go.

O ye who never faced the darkness deep,
Who see the world through earthly, fleeting glass,
For you these deeds are but a tale to keep,
But for others, hear the thunder's mournful pass.

One night, consumed by anger and despair,
A vision came, a shape both dark and strange,
And as a star did pierce the midnight air,
I saw a maiden, beauty beyond range.

Her hair, like spun gold, flowed to her feet,
Where blooms of precious stones, like rubies bright,
Did shimmer in the darkness, bittersweet,
Two living fates, reflecting heaven's light.

These gems, like angels' wings, forever gleam,
A memory etched upon my soul's dark shore;
The rest is lost within a misty dream,
But still, those flowers beckon evermore.

And I, a captive in the depths below,
Like serpent's spawn, with wings of blackened hue,
Remembered once the throne where I did glow,
Betrayed by one whose heart was cold and true.

For she, the queen, had cast her icy gaze,
Upon my soul, and filled me with despair;
I felt the fire of anger rise in haze,
And vowed to burn her world beyond compare.

But then a spirit, pure and full of grace,
Did open doors I thought forever sealed;
He whispered words that left no trace,
And led me forth, my fate now revealed.

She dreamt of eagles, soaring through the night,
Their wings outstretched, a symbol of her might;
They tore her crown, a vision dark and grim,
A prophecy foretold, a future dim.

Then I returned, a feathered phantom bold,
My husars flanking me, a story told;
The dream unfolded, bright as morning's ray,
And she confessed, the truth of that fateful day.

The moon was full, and stars like candles bright
Did gleam upon the azure vault of night;
In grasses, crickets chirped and fireflies did dance,
While on the sandy hill, the castle stood in trance.

A northern chill, with scent of wildwood green,
And heart that beat with sorrow's mournful sheen,
Two-fold its rhythm pulsed within my breast,
When she was near, and steed beside me pressed.

She held her braids in one hand, fair and bright,
With other pointed north, towards the fading light.
"I shall not tread that path," I then did say,
"For 'gainst the storms alone, a soul must stray.

But on my steed, with spurs of steel I'll ride,
And chase until another such fair sight,
As thou art shown by mortal eyes below,
Be it queen of fire or water's gentle flow!"

"If not," I swore, "I'll return as blood-red wraith,
And thou shalt know the shadow from this place.
The moon doth cast a ghastly form upon the grass,
From steed, from eagle wings, and mortal mass.

The moon bestows that dreadful, spectral guise,
The wind doth drive it forth, and sorrow cries;
But should God spare it with His gentle breeze,
Then thunder's wrath may bring it back with ease."

Thus speaking, I did gesture with my hand,
More fierce because alone, and powerless to withstand.
The stars upon the fields of purest white,
With watchful eyes and ears, beheld the night.

Upon the east, a crimson ribbon shone,
A phantom shape on plains of grey unknown,
As if beneath those dawn-kissed skies they flowed,
Like waves upon the sea, their course bestowed.

Diana, like a willow leaf so green,
Then rose as roseleaf gold, in fiery sheen,
She plunged within the mists, her form did sway,
A heart's desire, as fickle as the day.

And I, with wings outstretched towards the east,
Yearned for new life, and sought release;
I fled like specter pale, more from my thought,
Than any guard that might have stood distraught.

Today, through spirit's gaze, the world is known,
Then veiled in mystery, a golden ghost was shown,
In blood it lured with wondrous, tempting prize,
And cursed all magic won by wicked lies.

It cried like babe, when choked and held so tight,
As if a shield of light had banished night;
A terror born, as though an angel's call,
Did pierce the darkness, standing over all.

Through shadowed woods, where I did wander lost,
A phantom eagle soared, at what a cost!
He who beheld me thought he saw the fiend,
For all his future held within his keen.

He saw the armor, wings, and hammer strong,
And babe that burned like candle in the throng,
Amidst the pines, near heaven's embrace so high,
A blade of bronze, a fiery spark on high.

Upon a barren heath, amidst the trees,
I met with Germany, wild and full of ease;
O spirit! Painter of bygone days!
Doth thou still see those walls of ancient ways?

The chariots, fires, faces lit with glee,
And Roman pyres, where white bones lay to be,
With eagles torn from legions' valiant hold,
Like golden lamps and crowns, a story told.

Thou seest them yet, and askest in thy heart,
Who gave thee voice, who played this fateful part?
"Countless," I cried, "like stars that fill the night!
As lightning strikes when heavens open wide!"

Through you, I'll carve the world, and bury deep,
I, son of ashes, father of the sleep!
Hurrah! A white star shone upon the dawn,
And all awoke!… All was reborn!

All!… Hundreds of fierce forms arose in might,
Ready for carnage, bathed in bloody light.
All!… Yet 'midst the ferns, a glassy form did lie,
A wondrous shape of peace, beneath the sky.

It slept serene, as dawn's first rays did gleam,
A statue cast in morning's golden beam.
And then I spoke: "Is this some queen so fair,
Of vanquished tribes, with innocence to spare?

Who sleeps so sweetly on a bed of green,
Her words like whispers, soft and seldom seen?"
Then savage hands did tear her from her rest,
Her head, a lamp that banished darkness' breast.

It leaped into the sky, a fleeting star,

And then it fell, a meteor from afar.

The Prophecy of the King with a Fierce Countenance
XII

And I, consumed by wrath… and the clangor!
Striking down that barbarian at his brow,
I cleave him so that like a grenade of gold,
His skull did shatter, here and there asunder.
And I, beholding that clockwork of life,
With secrets writ in crimson herb's design,
The pulse of all its springs yet moving strong,
Compared two heads as if two spirits entwined.

XIII

Scarcely had I wrought this deed… new powers did rise,
Statues summoned by vengeance's fiery call,
They came to aid me… so that though the throng
Pressed down upon me with a stony wall,
I was like lightning when forests trembled deep,
And filled that people with a chilling dread;
In such terror's blaze, they loved and hailed me King,
"Caesar!" they cried, their voices trembling, spread.

XIV

Today, a slumber deep within this wood doth lie!
Or perhaps the white statue still remains?
Or maybe some distant cottage tells my tale,
And yet believes not… nor knows how on destruction's trail,
The vengeful statue sent its knights to me?
And seeing me as darkness' raging storm,
The starry spirits hung above my head.

XV

Know ye not, people, through what trials I have passed,
Through what deeds, through what torments untold,
I gathered those millions of spectral hosts?
Which when I summon, fill me with dread and cold!
For they are from diverse suns, from distant lands,
Like garlands in the clouds, like lanterns bright,
They manifest when I myself am weak,
And call upon them for aid in darkest night.

XVI

With barbarians… alone… on sacred ground,
Man… Spirit… I watched with care the wonders shown,

That appear at the cradle of nations' sound,
And vanish when a single branch is blown.
But grafted by lightning's flash, and fear in air,
The boredom that reigns over such fleeting hours,
They tremble… like the bleating of hens at Pilate's door,

XVII

It seems as though wounded birds forever cry,
Their mournful song like a child's lamenting sigh;
Before dawn's terror, the heavens grow dark and dim,
More stars emerge upon the azure rim.
People gather by city fires, hands clasped tight,
And in the silence of the hour, they fear the night,
Ready to deny the divine spirit's grace,
They look at each other with suspicion's face.

XVIII

I felt it though my blood beat like a thunderbolt,
My helmet ringing with its fiery sound;
The fire burned red, and from its depths it wrought,
A hammer that fell like a moon upon the ground.
The horse spoke… the spear grew… the sword did sing,
Winds whispered counsel, clouds provided shield;
Crows cried warnings of ill days to come,
And golden cranes held keys to days revealed.

XIX

Through all earthly powers I was warned and shown,
I fell upon my wretched land below;
Lech was no more, his people slain and prone,
They gazed at their queen as if a living star did glow.
She too, in armor of gold, painted with flowers bright,
Like a sunlit marvel, in the midst of battle's fray,
A vision like the white Anhelica, shining light,

XX

Around her, a constant throng of living men,
Blackened armor, swords and shields held high, banners unfurled.
Whenever evening cloaked itself in mist again,
Like nocturnal birds or spirits from the world,
They rose from the bogs of Wends and Chud,
Yellow Polovtsians, Tatars by the sea,
And rained down arrows upon our faces, a thousand strong,
But they were harmless… more terrifying when their cries prolong.

XXI

I still remember that cry, that wail so deep,
Of many nations, speaking tongues unknown;
When those hordes of Rus' at the Vistula's steep,
Were pressed against the waves by my legions grown.
They begged for peace and a share of our land,
The oldest thousand warriors from their ranks,

A sliver of earth… barely enough to be their tomb,

Lo, I sat upon the chariot of the Germans, a beast of gold and red like unto a lion's hide,
And spake: "Let first the maidens braid their tresses, daughters of the ancient Supans,
Let Wanda herself, softened by tears and longing, come to our feast,
To pour wine for us. Let her golden hair be borne aloft upon German shields."

XXII

And when she is proclaimed Queen through savage lands,
Crowned with a moon-silvered shield of bronze,
She shall sing unto us a song of new tribes!
And our wild souls shall be captivated!
Then I will open my trembling arms wide,
To receive her as a dove descending from the heavens,
And she shall beseech with rosy lips:
"What dost thou desire? The whole heaven and half the earth?"

XXIII

Thus spake Swityn and Czerczak, messengers of old,
And departed. But her image, once but a dream,
Began to blaze within my mind like the sun,
Growing ever more fervent and fiery.
Then, as I lay upon my bed,
A fiery Gehenna, filled with lightning's wrath,
Blazed before me, dark and crimson, like a furnace.

XXIV

I tore at my leather garments, yet felt bound to the bed,
And she entered those terrible flames,
A spirit wreathed in rainbow hues,
With rings of stars dancing above her head,
Weaving a single song upon diverse notes:
Ringing, wondrous! Like celestial instruments.

XXV

Hearing these voices, with which the maiden approached me,
I fled from my body, and she, red and blue as fire,
Turning like the wings of an aerial mill,
Led me forth, tearing at my hair through every groan and note,
Following her into the abyss like a madman.

XXVI

The night was still young, yet I donned my helmet, mounted my steed, and rode swiftly.
I remember the pearly gray air,
And the castle, its tower piercing the sky above the Vistula,
Where the people had surrounded their queen with walls of flesh and brick.
There, upon arrival, I sounded a brazen horn,
My voice booming until all my horses reared in fear.

XXVII

Out stepped Swityn, the gray-haired Voivode,
Wiping sleep from his bloodshot eyes.
"Go," I said, "for I regret the sharpness of yesterday's words,
I have shown too much of my true face.
Let your queen, fair and young, cast her spells, raise her visor,
Perhaps she will readily fulfill this command:
To sing for me and fall into my embrace."

XXVIII

Swityn said nothing, but led me to the riverbank,
Where a small crowd gathered. Fishermen held silver nets,
And priests carried candles (though dawn was already breaking),
With harps they sat upon a small rock beneath a pale willow, shrouded in morning mist.
On the hillsides, torches were lit in the darkness.

XXIX

Upon the meadow, maidens and handmaidens bustled about.
Some bore flowers, silver censers, golden crescent moon-shaped diadems;
Others gathered blossoms for crowns,
Thousands of colors scattered into the silver air, the gray mist,
As offerings to the nymphs of the Vistula.

XXX

Oh, ancient world! I summon forth an ancient image!
But how many times has the dawn's blush,
And flowers plucked from the mist, awakened me?
The birdsong of the forest, the rising sun,
The rainbows that inspire my thoughts,
When my spirit ignites like a torch,
Remind me of this poignant vision:
The corpse of the queen adorned upon the meadow.

XXXI

Like the moon, when it sheds its first gold in autumn's light,
And melts into the azure sky,
Turning the brow slightly rosy,
Above the forest garlands, where golden leaves tremble amidst flames,
Full and round, pale, it transforms
Into a mist… like the face of a silver phantom.

XXXII

Such was her pallor! Inclined towards the abyss of death,
Her lips, pearls from the nymphs of the Vistula,
Smiled with a ghastly, demonic malice.
Yet she allowed those women to adorn her in the darkness of the larch trees,
With golden crowns and amber wreaths—
And fear magnified the corpse in the eyes of the common folk.

Behold! And lo, I beheld a visage most fearsome,
From beneath the helmet's shadow did I gaze with severity.
And shattering my blade, in lightning's flash,
I hurled its fragments above my head;

A darkness of spirits descended, and golden candlesticks
Rose like Olympian tempests around my purple-clad mantle,
My spirit stood upon the helmet, consumed by flames.

The first cry that issued forth from his mouth was not a man's,
But a beastly roar, awakening a hundred thousand Germans;
They marched as a surging sea from afar.
I erected a monstrous monument, a kingly pyre!
So high it stood that the Vistula River,
Upon a wall of pallid corpses, halted its flow—
A spectral apparition draped in purple.

But ere I delivered it to the flames,
Oh, how many dreadful lamentations did I hear!
"O! My hair! I shall not yield you to your rings
To wither in the Vistula's fire-kissed diamonds!
I command that shadows be transformed into subterranean realms,
Into halls of pillars and winding corridors,
In an alabaster tomb I shall lay thee,
And bid a songstress, a column, guard thee for eternity."

Entombed, slumbering in eternal sleep,
Upon white silks I shall lay her still;
I myself, like a lion, shall lie down, and with a mortal sigh
Disturb thy peaceful slumber.
Wilt thou then rise? And with a kiss
Grant me the awakening of light and dawn?
And wilt thou heed my voice in these subterranean shadows,
Reading eternally upon the stones?

In a land devoid of sun, stars, or moon,
Where perpetual gloom, silence, and darkness reign;
I, the knight, like a slumbering tempest,
With an open, glassy eye and parched throat;
And thou, my mournful reader,
Like a pearl pouring forth its song into my ear,
A mistress of words and melodies,
Such that a song from a thousand years… a moment… becomes!

Thus spake he, foretelling posthumous events
And voices. And once more consumed by fire,
I yearned to lay her upon swords' constellations,
To bathe her in the crimson banner of chivalry!
From that land where the sun scorches the body
With unnatural and inhuman heat,
To flee to the frozen isle of Iceland,
Where seven volcanoes blaze red.

"There," I cried, "upon the glaciers,
I shall lay thee as a flower encased in crystal!
And amidst the volcanic rubies' brilliance,
Upon a craggy precipice, I shall seat her;
And myself, with wild eagles on the cliffs,
More savage than storms! More terrifying than waves!
When mountains spew forth their fiery breath,
I shall surrender to frostbite and be consumed by flames!"

Thus my spirit cast itself into pyramidal shapes,
Gushing forth with primal force;
Thus I tore at new chains of fate
And always carried lightning under the clouds.
Then time took its course,
And enveloped me in Lechian purple.
The entire people trembled in abject terror.
I sat upon the throne, darkened and dimmed.

Who would dare to record this in human annals,
For fleeting fame, not for confession?
I resolved to terrify the heavens,
To strike them like a bronze shield,
To pierce the azure with transgressions and open it,
And shake the pillars of law upon which sits
The Angel of Life, until God himself is revealed in the heavens—pale.

But if not God's visage, violated over this fortress of life,
Then golden comets will descend upon the sky,
And reveal their reckoning closer to earth,
Their tails trailing over the castle like phantoms, one, two, three…
If I do not tremble, and blood stains me…
Who knows!? As thousands of suns approach!

Heavens filled with visions and faces
Solar! Perhaps with bloody eyes!
And around me, the air of graveyards
And a perpetual storm, wind, fire, and winter,
Blood-stained winds, the voice of corpses from their bones,
The sun will dim, the moon will stand still,
Will a star whimper or bark?
All shall reveal that they care for man!…

"If not," I said, "if with this rabble
I act like a mad king?
And life, like a serpent, hides under its shelter,
As if it felt no wound within itself?
Then men are dust! And I am dust
For one day here, like a sword forged!
And the more terrifying because my own forces
Did not raise me from the earth by ghostly hands."

Scarcely had this thought taken root in me,
When my gaze instantly became clear and dry,
Entering human thoughts secretly,
To see if there were spirits within their bones.
Then forward went the rooster at my feet, vilely begging for its head,
Under the whips of both sides he went,
And behind him came two prophets,
Whose bloody heads I see tonight in dreams.

Behold! And lo, when I unveiled the visage of dread,
Gazing forth from beneath my helmet's crown,
And shattered the blade, in lightning's speed,
I hurled its fragments above my head.

A darkness descended, a shroud of ghostly might,
Golden candles flickered, swords ablaze with light,
Like Olympian storms, they rose and took their stand,
My spirit within the helmet, consumed by firebrand.

The first cry that erupted from my lips, beastly and vile,
No longer the voice of man, but a creature's wail,
Awakened the Germans, a hundred thousand strong,
They surged like a tempestuous sea, their fury long.

A ghastly monument I erected, fit for a king,
So towering it seemed to pierce the heavens' ring,
The Vistula River, choked by bones of pale decay,
Stalled against its wall, a spectral shroud in purple sway.

But ere I consigned it to flames, oh! what lamentations did I hear!
"O! Hair! I shall not let your beauty wither and disappear!
In fire's embrace, nor on Vistula's banks shall you fade,
I'll banish your shadows to caverns deep, a labyrinth made.

Within alabaster tombs, I'll lay your form so fair,
A chorus of eternity, forever singing there.
Entombed in eternal slumber, upon silken white,
I shall descend like a lion, and with my breath ignite

Your peaceful sleep with mortal terror, then arise anew,
And with a kiss, awaken you to the dawn's bright hue?
Will you heed my voice in these subterranean shades,
Reading forevermore on stones, the secrets that it braids?"

In a land devoid of sun, stars, and moon's gentle light,
Where perpetual gloom reigns, I stand, a knight.
With an open, glassy eye, and parched with endless night,
And you, my mournful reader, like pearls upon my sight,

Weaving tales of ages past, in whispers soft and low,
A mistress of words and song, whose verses ever flow.
From a thousand years condensed to a fleeting moment's grace,
You paint the tapestry of time with an ethereal embrace.

Thus spoke he, foreseeing things beyond mortal ken,
And voices from the abyss, where shadows dwell again.
Consumed by fiery passion, I yearned to crown her high,
Upon a throne of swords, bathed in crimson sky!

From this land where the sun scorches with unnatural heat,
I'd flee to Iceland's frozen shores, where glaciers meet.
Amidst the seven volcanoes' fiery embrace,
I'd lay her there, a crystal bloom, in time and space.

"There," I cried, "upon the ice floes, she shall reside,
Adorned by volcanic fire, with naught to hide.
With wild eagles on cliffs, fiercer than storms that rage,
When mountains spew their molten wrath, I'll face the fiery cage!"

Thus my spirit, in pyramidal forms, did take flight,
Releasing primal forces, a tempestuous might.
New chains of fate I wove, with lightning ever near,
And then the years took hold, and shrouded me in fear.

The people trembled, consumed by abject dread,
As I ascended the throne, my visage pale and red.
Who would dare to chronicle this tale for mortal eyes?
Not for fleeting fame, but for a soul's lamenting cries.

I vowed to shake the heavens, to pierce the azure dome,
With sins that stain the sky, and make the angels groan.
To shatter the pillars of truth, where life's angel stands,
And reveal God in his pallid form, across the barren lands.

But if not God's visage, then comets shall descend,
Their golden tails ablaze, a message to comprehend.
They'll taint the castle walls with their spectral grace,
One, two, three, a harbinger of time and space.

If I falter, if blood stains my soul, who knows what may unfold?
Perhaps thousands of suns will rise, stories yet untold!

The heavens shall be filled with visions, faces bright,
Some with eyes of crimson fire, a terrifying sight.
Around me, the air thickens with the scent of death's embrace,
A constant tempest rages, wind, fire, and icy space.

Blood-stained winds howl, voices rise from skeletal remains,
The sun dims its light, the moon halts in its chains.
Will a star whimper or bark? Will it tremble in fear?
All shall reveal that they care for man!…

Before the marshal, all the court and servants
Were sent by me, as if in league with him.
And from the towers I gazed upon that chain so long
Of those marching to death, with candles in their shackles.
O heavens! heavens, azure frames of light,
As if unaware of heads removed,
They looked on this silent, indifferent scene—
Yet to me it seemed mournful indeed!

XLVIII
A vast procession of the murdered ones
Passed by. I thought I would see spirits arise
Like swans, rosy-hued,
From which the air moans and weeps;
Or that from walls inscribed with fire

Spiders would emerge from the flames—terrible weavers!
On the fiery walls they would sway themselves
And write some fiery decree!

XLIX
I thought my nights would be restless,
And days like starless nights, black as pitch,
In darkness, cries or the clang of arms,
Breath on a cold brow or steaming hot!—
And nothing!… that terrible spirit to whom I waged war
Left behind an innocent child unpunished;
And I raised my chest proud and strong,
Ready to fight to the end against divine scorn.

L
Through ancient eyes I see that abominable
First work of the spirit from those times,
When whole steppes today visible in graves
Took the name "Red" among the people…
Then they saw me, that in a hideous form
I took on the appearance of tormented spirits.
People thought my bowels were rotting,
And I was drowsy like a snake when it yawns.

LI
Sometimes from atop the brass-plated spire
Of the tower, like sheep,
The first states of Karacze, Supany
I would lead through various trials.
There they were laid on bloody pyres,
On the pyre, weeds and black juniper were piled.
And I, sometimes, like a wild vulture from above
Saw those ants moving in the flames.

LII
Ten times the stars and suns turned red
… Ten screams together I heard;
And my soul did not rise up in horror,
Nor did my heart tremble with fear…
Like Lucifer with his glittering crown
I stand… and my companions in crime
Look upon a greater horror than all these—
Upon my face of mortal paleness.

LIII
All are amazed that I do not bark like a dog,
Do not roar like a lion, do not gnash like a man;
They do not know that I, a spirit inspired, await
Stars, bloody rain; and again take up the sword,
And again unleash the whole world upon itself!
And again I ask the darkened heavens:
With the sword which I thrust into the human womb,
Which terrorizes the divine power there?

LIV
Whatever power this mind possesses,
I have used it to invent torments.

Piles, ships split on the Vistula,
A wheel that prolonged the length of bodies…
All in this incomprehensible country of suffering
Endured and consumed its patience!
And heaven endured all this patiently,
Until I crushed the boat and oar with my spirit.

LV
I went further… and in the choice of torments
Being unable to create anything more terrifying,
I began to break greater divine laws,
Thinking to humiliate nature itself.
Mother was placed before me from the forest…
And instead of kneeling at her feet,
At this tattered woman's side,
I used the body as a wick for a pitch candle…

LVI
I told the people that she bewitched me,
That she ate my heart, that she poisoned my wife.
With burning hair like a bird she flew
And died. Then my face became disfigured
And showed the greenness of the body,
As if the spirit's garment was tearing;
Yet he in the body knew nothing of himself,
In lethargy, as if in a black sickness.

LVII
Only once was I so bold in heaven,
That I looked at myself, gazing into the mirror.
And I was like a corpse blackened,
Which had been in the earth for a century,
And already worms had crawled out of it,
Fearing the bright eyes like lightning;
And red tears of terror
Of the corpse… and the flames of decaying bones.

LVIII
But what is more strange, that I am so rotting!
So fallen! And so worn out!
Sometimes I felt like a burning angel,
Ready to love the world and carry it into the heavens
This earth as an angel ascending
With a song… which was like glass scraping
Harmonica sounds and went in a tone ever more mournful,
Until it fell into laughter, madness of song!

LIX
When I was sometimes possessed by such a spell
And stood, having broken my arms from my shoulders,
Although only foam flowed from tears,
And my lips were silent, then my spirit, bewitched,
Seemed to be turned by all the moons,
And stars like musical signs
Caught and expressed in earthly voices:
Creating no longer the Song of Sleep, but the Song of Power.

LX
There was only one squire with me,
Only one, and this song ensnared him.
Terrible voices flew into him,
His bones rattled… his chest broke down.
He walked and spoke in his sleep, and trembled all over,
Like a cedar box of an instrument,
Which the musician filled with resonance
Of tones… and closed with a thunderous sound.

LXI
And meanwhile, the great Heavenly Lord
Clothed me in terror and awe.
And fear was some dark, royal thing,
That filled every corner of the palace.
Under my feet, dry floorboards creaked
Like coffins. People whispered about the room with a scent
Of death, mystery, and blood,
That it was haunted, secret, and bloody.

LXII
The world dreamed of me. Among the workers
In underground kitchens they spoke, that I was pale
As the moon when seen in a bloody cauldron,
Where snakes nestle;
That some golden star led me
(Purple footprints were imprinted there)
To a dark land where every soul is enraged,
To the king of red spirits—to hell.

LXIII
And what is more strange, that I was loved
For strength and fear, and for suffering.
When I went out… the people knelt before me,
A flock of sheep who flock to their shepherds!
Before my terrible face they bowed,
Seeing two wings of the helmet like lanterns!
And between them, in the center, hung
That face, like a corpse lamp, green and ghastly.

In ruby's gaze and strange light doth gleam;
As if by blade the lids were rent apart;
And through the crimson, ruby-hued extreme,
A spectre stares, a cursed soul of art.

Through what torments, Lord! What humbling plight,
What scourges borne from cross upon the wood?
Must I have scraped the terror from my sight,
The angel's darkness from mine eyes subdued?

I summoned forth thy sun and moonlit grace,
And meteor's fire, and tempest's raging might;
Against thy wrath a shield did I embrace,
To see, O servant, to whom doth service plight.

Thy visage, Lord! I sought to comprehend,
Thy fourfold lightning, guardians of the sphere;
All powers that tremble at thy sovereign hand,
And all the suns, and moons, and worlds held dear.

Thou didst disdain me, Lord, and pass me by,
To death's dread maw didst thou condemn my soul;
Yet Swityn lived, a man of fame so high,
He beat back foes, atoned for sins untold.

He stretched the bounds of my dominion wide,
Upon two silver seas he set me down;
An aged warrior, yet with sword beside,
A father's love I bore him, crown to crown.

I recall, 'twas midnight's solemn chime,
And Cygnus soared, a golden cross on high;
Above the tower where I dwelt in time,
A lamp of emptiness against the sky.

Then thought most foul of Swityn's passing fell,
Into my heart, a serpent's venom cold;
With such fierce power it seized me, and did swell,
I offered forth my hand, as child to hold.

Yet I would banish it, this haunting dread,
But 'twas the mistress now of my desire;
"Attempt," she whispered, "if he should be dead,
Would dawn not break? Would stars not burn with fire?

Would blood not stain the earth, a crimson tide?
Then peace shall find thy soul, and fear subside.
Earth is but dust, man bursts from it like flame."

Thus spake a voice, and urged me on my way;
Though hundred Swityns, fathers of my own,
With silvered brows gazed down upon this day,
I would not flinch before the blood I'd sown.

I sent forth executioners to claim,
But thought, like tree, grows ever more severe;
A second band, a king, his wife, his name,
His children too, I bade them disappear.

The day was dark, with hail and storm unleashed,
And sunbeams pale did pierce the leaden sky;
Like golden chaff, upon my armor pressed,
As I stood waiting for those souls to die.

At my threshold gathered beggars, gray and wan,
They saw a king, a phantom in the rain;
Through sheets of water, struck by hail's sharp span,
A figure clad in armor, bearing pain.

Then from the mist, an ancient spectre came,
A beggar old, who stood before me stark;
Like statue carved, he seemed to rise and claim

My soul, and offered a letter from the dark.

Song III

I

In those grand halls, our governors did keep
Court minstrels, singers of a noble breed;
They were like bards of chivalry asleep,
Wise men, yet blind, with silvered beards indeed.

Like silver armor, long their beards did flow,
And sunlit faces held a gentle grace;
Their lyres were small, but famed for melodies that glow,
Set in coral, silver, or amber's embrace.

II

They held like staffs, long wands of willow bright,
With tips of bone, to guide the youthful choir;
And when aloft they raised them to the light,
A bolt of song would pierce the very air.

But when they lowered it, a gentle plea,
The music fell as angels on their knees;

Thus with foot bare, and on a robe of white,
A pilgrim crane, with visage fair and bright,
With silvered hair, in garments old as night,
Stood 'midst the clouds, a phantom in their light.

And offered forth a scroll… like Iris' hand,
Dragging a rainbow o'er the thirsty land,
With stars and roses scattered through the sand,
None doth compare to this, from realms so grand!

Oh! Golden heart of singer, servant true,
That suffers martyr's pain for master's view!
A grave thou shalt possess, by plow untrod,
Like cursed fowl, forevermore bestowed.

Here rise eternally in song and might,
Through ages long, until that song takes flight,
And be a lesson to mankind's cruel art,
To love with passion, though it rend the heart!

Sing on! And let thy lyre sometimes descend,
Recount the spells thou knowest, without end.
Words pure and potent, like angels' choir,

Arranged in order, setting souls afire.

Forgive me now this wound, this grievous pain,
This crippling touch that stole thy wandering strain.
The magic of thy song, thy freedom lost,
By cruel hand, at what a heavy cost!

He offered me a scroll… and on his foot,
I placed my sword, with twisted blade of soot.
And felt it pierce between his bones so frail,
Yet he stood firm, like God, enduring pain's exhale.

Fastened to the stone floor, crimson stained,
A living coral, lifeblood unrestrained.
He stood… enveloped in that azure haze,
And gazed upon me with a childlike gaze.

I did not lift the blade from his embrace,
But drove it deeper, into his sacred space.
Words like demons burned within my mind,
Etched upon my soul, a truth unkind.

This letter, branded on my heart's dark core,
Revealed the depths of hate he held in store.
He scorned me yet, though love he did profess,
A traitor to his land, a soul distressed!

Oh, traitor to my country, tyrant king!
My ruler yesterday, now banished thing!
I sought exile willingly, to spare thy hand,
From measuring out my doom upon the sand.

Thou banishest me? And I, your sovereign lord,
Leave thee my soldiers, banners all adored.
I vanish without trace, save for this pain,
No other treasure do I take again.

Had I been willing, gladly would I yield,
My weary head to thy sword's cruel field.
With smiling face, a crown of blood I'd wear,
A soul untouched by death, beyond compare.

But thou art cold, devoid of human grace,
Thy heart a tomb where love finds no embrace.
Thou mockest love's last gaze, and dost despise,
The mortal bone, beneath thy cruel eyes.

Angels warned me in my slumber deep,
Thy spirit stood before me, dark and steep.
Like torch ablaze in mist, it burned so bright,
A vision filled with terror and with fright.

Thou didst forewarn me… not from kindness born,
But for the monstrous form thou hast outworn.
That I might hear thee, feel thy presence near,
When thoughts of death approach, and fill with fear.

Thy spirit, more compassionate than thine own,
First probes thy heart, then warns the souls unknown.
It wanders through the land, a mournful cry,
A woman's wail beneath a starless sky.

Thou wakest, weary from its haunting song,
Unaware of tears that flow all night long.

Some monstrous angel hath transformed thee so,
To carry out a task of dreadful woe.
He stirs the hearts of men, and turns them cold,
And leaves thy soul as stone, forever old.

He bids them till the earth like barren ground,
To gather souls from death, where they are bound.
And soon those spirits, freed from mortal chains,
Shall join the angels in celestial plains.

But turn upon thee, like a raging storm,
A whirlwind of their wrath, and bring thee harm!

So wield thy power while this day remains,
The strength of sword and axe, that brings such pains.
I wait for thee at judgment's final hour,
With this same scroll, to seal thy doom with power.

Beyond the world, upon the burning shore,
Where crimson waves crash on forevermore,
I stand, with letter clutched within my hand,
To face thee there, and make thee understand!

No more shall shine upon me thy bright grace,
Though near I fly, a silver crane in chase.
My journey's secret known to few alone,
Myself, my steed, and bard of ages flown.

Thou canst not catch the swiftness of the breeze,
Nor outrun my horse, nor bend my spirit's ease.
But if thy age, and song's enchanting art,
Can move thee still, then king, thou hast a part!

XXXVI
But after years! — I would speak more,
When suddenly a torment of bones did seize me.
Through the leaden cap, a hundred thousand sparks
Did fly; the wire melted upon me, and the tin.
I sought to keep my princely form,
Yet I cracked like clay in fire.
My eyes were shrouded by a black cloud,
And my spirit gathered into one grain.

XXXVII
No more. A dreadful darkness and silence!

Upon my heart, the hand of God did lay;
The final pressure, beneath which my soul
Did shatter in fragments, and my gaze went to judgment.
Like a worm that writhes in fire,
So she, while breath remained within her,
Lay at the bottom of her own dear wound,
Until God opened unto her the gates of eternity.

XXXVIII
Such was the end of my mortal life,
Long sung by bards in this land;
Who have not grasped what was its essence,
What virtue it held above Roman kings?
Above me shone a golden, sunlit thought,
To which dark, blood-soaked dawns did lead me,
Straight to the gates of gold.
I walked as a warrior, stained with blood, yet fearless.

XXXIX
Life echoed in every string of my soul,
Power was heard in every step I took;
Yet to walk such a path? better in a tomb!
With such a thought? better with a spear at my side!
Sooner or later, the rain of thunderbolts will fall
Upon the eagle that bore the sun upon its eye;
Upon me — a crane with outstretched neck
Towards the future — God's bolts still strike.

XL
But through me this fatherland did grow,
Even its names were given by my hand;
And with the thrust of my blood-soaked oar
It yet moves forward: Poland — a land of pain — a rock!
A wave has twice swept it from its course,
And its holy spirit went to sleep in flowers,
Lifeless, dead; but what I wrung forth
In blood, that always triumphs when it shines.

XLI
Sleep now, my first form, separated from the soul,
Shining afar like a moon in its newness;
A spectre, cursed for the blood spilled,
In a coat of wire and a cap of lead.
A curse upon thee! Like diamonds,
Like basalt columns in the wilderness
Of primal nature, built from spirit,
Into darkness, clouds, and lightning clad.

XLII
Yet I set my foot upon thee,
And walked on; for now I was divine.
The seas shall retreat, mountains turn to dust,
And the world shall tremble at comets' rain,
When by spirit I fulfill what flesh achieved.
A spirit shown in the first dawn of creation,
To whom God lifts his veils,
And a thousand years are but a single moment.